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FRIENDS IN NEED

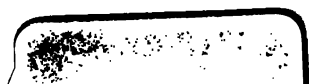
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THE MOTHER'S RETURN

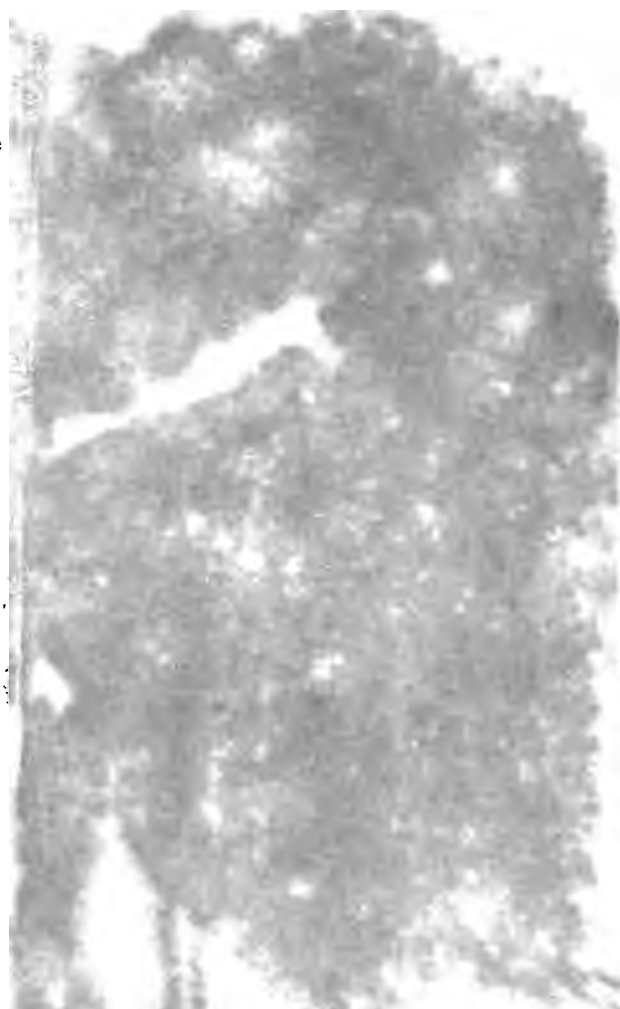


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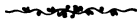


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FRIENDS IN NEED.





KNITTING THE CUFFS.

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FRIENDS IN NEED.

THE MOTHER'S RETURN.



THOMAS NELSON AND SONS,

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FRIENDS IN NEED.

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”—Prov. xix. 17.



THE MOTHER'S APPROACH.

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ALIE went to the place of meeting early one morning, but Madge was not beneath the old thorn-tree. Alie

did not hear the gipsy girl's accustomed greeting as she ran forward barefoot to meet her. Alie called her name softly, but no voice replied. She looked in the direction where the tent had been pitched; the tent was gone, there was nothing now to obstruct her view to the very end of the green lane! Alie felt sad and yet thankful. What a short time had been given to her in which she could serve poor Madge! But that short time had not been wasted; she had caught the opportunity on the wing, before, as she believed, it had passed away for ever.

"But I should have liked to have seen her once more. I should have liked to have said good-bye, and to have given her something to keep as a remembrance of me," thought Alie, as she slowly walked along the lane towards the blackened spot which showed where the gipsies had lighted their fire. "Perhaps we shall never look on each other's faces again until we meet before the great white throne. Oh! may we both be on the right hand then. She *did* love to listen when I told her of the Lord; and he can keep her from temptation and guide her to himself. She promised to repeat, morn

and night, that little prayer which I taught her. I think that she will do so, if only for my sake; for I am sure that she loved me,—poor unhappy little Madge. Oh, if I had had time to teach her a few verses more!”

Alie was startled from her reflections by a sound, something between a sob and a cry, which came from some place near the spot where the tent of the gipsies had stood. She stopped, listened, and heard it again. The voice was like that of one in bitter distress. Alie fancied that she could distinguish her own name! Doubtless it was poor Madge who was crying; but if she were there, so might her parents be also, and Alie was terrified at the idea of meeting the gipsies in so lonely a spot, quite out of sight of any dwelling. She could see nothing of them as she looked down the lane; but again and again rose that wailing cry.

“It is that *fear of man* which would keep me now from doing to others as I would they should do unto me,” thought Alie; and, mustering all her resolution, she ventured further into the lane. She had not proceeded many steps when she heard the voice of Madge distinctly exclaim, in tones of tremulous joy:

"Oh, it is you, Alie! it is you at last! I thought that you would come to the thorn; but, oh, I was so afraid that you would not hear my crying,—that you would go away, and leave me here to starve!"

"Where are you?" exclaimed Alie, looking about her in surprise at not seeing the speaker.

"Here,—up here, just at the other side of the hedge."

"Why don't you come down?"

"I can't,—I'm tied to a tree! I've been tied all night!" exclaimed the poor child, bursting into an agony of tears, which for some time prevented Alie from understanding another word which she uttered.

Alie lost no time in making her way to the place. She clambered up the mossy bank, careless of nettles,—scrambled over the low briery hedge on the top,—and beyond it, fastened to the trunk of a tree, she found the unhappy Madge, pale, exhausted with crying and want of rest, her arms chafed by the cord which bound her, and which she had vainly struggled to break. Happily Alie had a knife in her pocket, or she could never have unloosed the tightened

knots. The moment that Madge was free she fell sobbing into the arms of her deliverer.

"How cruel! oh, how cruel to bind you so!" exclaimed Alie; "what had you done to make them so angry?"

"I had done nothing!" cried Madge between her sobs. "Perhaps they wanted to keep me from going after them: they need not have been afraid,—I'd have given no trouble!"

"Do you think that they mean to come back soon?" said Alie, glancing timidly around.

"I don't think so," replied the girl. "They would not tell me where they were going, nor let me see which way they went. It was all done so quick! Father came home late yesterday, and said something to mother,—something about being found out; mother started, seemed afraid, and pointed to me. Then they whispered together, looking at me every minute; and then they pulled down the tent, and packed up all in haste; and before they left, father tied me up here, and said he'd beat me if I made any noise."

"Let's come to my home," said Alie, "and

ask mother what's to be done. You must want a little breakfast sadly; and a little rest too, poor, poor Madge!"

Before many minutes were over the gipsy girl was seated at Mrs. Morris's deal table with a basin of warm bread and milk before her, feeling something like a traveller after a stormy voyage, when he has cast anchor in a haven at last. When Madge's hunger was satisfied, Alie led her to her own little crib where the poor child soon fell into a refreshing sleep.

Great was the wrath, great the indignation of Jonas, the old sailor, when, on returning from his morning's stroll, he heard from his sister the story of Madge. The idea of a helpless and innocent child being thus maltreated and abandoned roused all the licentiousness in his soul. Down came his brown fist with startling violence on the table, as with a hearty good-will he might have laid it on the gipsy; and a torrent of fierce abuse was about to pour from his lips, when, recollecting his resolution, he pressed them together with a mighty effort, and suffered his indignation to escape only through his flashing eyes.

"It is evident," said Mrs. Morris, "that they have found the poor child a burden, and so, hoping that she has made friends in this village, they have gone off and left her, taking care that no one should be able to trace them."

"They are—" commenced the sailor fiercely, then closed his lips tightly again.

"And now," continued Mrs. Morris, "the difficulty is how to dispose of this poor child. Notwithstanding all my efforts, I find it no easy matter in these hard times to maintain my own family, and send Johnny and Alie to school. I do not see how it would be possible for me to undertake the support of another child."

"Then, mother," said Johnny, who was present, "what will you do with poor Madge?"

"I do not see what I can do," replied his mother, "but send her at once to the work-house."

"The work-house!" exclaimed Johnny.

"The work-house!" echoed Alie. "Oh, mother, I'd work my fingers to the bone rather than send poor Madge away. She can share my dinner, my breakfast, my bed."

Mrs. Morris gravely shook her head; but Alie was too earnest to be easily discouraged.

"I could earn something,—I really could, mother! You know that Mrs. Mant said that I might help her in mending!" and the little girl looked imploringly into the face of her mother.

"My dear child, what you could earn would not supply Madge with enough of food to keep life in."

"I could get something for chopping firewood," began Johnny, and then stopped short; "but I hate the trouble, and shouldn't much like to tie myself up to do it! It wouldn't do to begin and not go on, I take it."

"It would not do at all," replied Mrs. Morris.

Jonas sat in profound thought, appearing as though he were making some deep calculation on his fingers. The truth is that the old seaman had as warm a heart, and as strong a desire to help the outcast, as any one present; but his means of doing so were very small. Much the greater part of his little pension was regularly paid to his sister, to cover the necessary expenses of the sailor's

board and lodging; and what Jonas reserved for himself was such a mere trifle that it barely sufficed to supply him with clothing and replenish his little tobacco pouch. But he, like Alie, was disposed to regard the desolate stranger as one whom the Almighty had committed to their protection, and the idea of sending her away to the work-house was repugnant to his kindly nature. Jonas turned over and over in his mind the means of supporting the child until she could be able to do something for herself, and at length he came to a decision.

"Yes," he muttered, half to himself, "yes, that's the thing! 'Twill cost me something maybe at first; but it's right, and I'll do it! The gipsy lass shall have my pipe!"

The children could not forbear laughing. "Little use she could make of it!" cried Johnny.

"That's the way with you youngers," said Jonas, rather pettishly; "you never know how to put two and two together. What's a pipe without 'bacco, and how's 'bacco to be had without money?" he continued, raising his voice. "The money that buys 'bacco for me would buy bread for the gipsy; and

your little earnings, my lass," he added, turning to Alie, "put on the top of my savings, might serve to keep the little boat afloat, without running it on the rough shore of a work-house."

Alie clapped her hands in delight. The eye of Mrs. Morris glistened. "My dear brother," said she, "I won't be behind you in this labour of love. If you think of making such a sacrifice—"

"Think!" cried Jonas bluffly; "it's not thinking, but doing!" and stumping up to the fire-place with an air of resolution, he again took his pipe from its place and deliberately snapped it in two! but could not refrain from a sigh as he looked on the broken pieces.

"You need not have broken it," observed Johnny; "'twould have done no mischief where it was."

"'Twould have been a temptation," replied Jonas, rubbing his chin; "'twould ha' been always putting me in mind of a want. If I hadn't broke my pipe, maybe I'd ha' broke my resolution."

"You will miss it sadly, I fear," said Mrs. Morris.

How much the poor old sailor missed his accustomed indulgence can only be guessed by those who have, like him, formed a habit of smoking till the pipe seems as necessary as daily food. It is a habit which I hope none of my young readers will adopt, the expense of it being one of its least disadvantages. But Jonas had been accustomed to smoke from his youth; he looked to his pipe as to his comfort and companion, and in giving it up he sacrificed really more than a lady would in putting down her carriage, or a sportsman in selling off his hounds. Therefore his pence were a nobler offering than their hundreds of guineas would have been.

Madge was now the happy inmate of a home whose simple comforts appeared luxuries to her. Its inmates vied with each other in showing her kindness. Except in school-time, or when she was at meals, Alie's little hands were busy from morning till night; and even Johnny tried his skill in cobbling a very old pair of his sister's shoes for Madge, and succeeded, more to his own admiration, it must be owned, than to that of any one else. Madge was now made neat

and clean, her hair cut and brushed, her rags mended ; and the change in her appearance was so great that Jonas said, looking at her with quiet satisfaction, that he should not have known the lass. There was a bright, happy expression now in Madge's blue eyes, and she did not start when suddenly addressed, as if she were afraid of being struck.

And if the outward change was so great, there was every probability that the inward would be yet more striking. Madge was docile and willing to be taught, and she could not be long under the roof of Mrs. Morris without receiving knowledge of the best and highest kind. The distinctions between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, honesty and theft, were becoming daily more and more clear to the child ; and she was gradually learning that which would give her the strongest motive for refusing the evil and choosing the good.

Madge had not been many days in her new home, when, to the surprise of the little family, then assembled round the dinner-table, a post-chaise stopped at the entrance. A gentleman dressed in black, with a paper in his hand, descended from the vehicle, and

after tapping at the door, though it stood open on account of the heat of the weather, walked straight into the kitchen.

"Beg pardon,—pray don't move," said he, waving his hand slightly, as the family rose at his entrance. "May I ask if your name is Morris?" he continued, first glancing at his paper, then at Alie's mother.

Wondering, and half alarmed at the unexpected visit, Mrs. Morris only answered by dropping a little courtesy; while Jonas muttered something about "land-shark," which it was intended no one should hear.

"I thought so,—hum!" said the lawyer, for such he was. "I have been directed to you as one who might give me some information as to the movements of a party of gipsies, upon whose track I have been for the last ten days."

"Indeed, sir, I know little about them," replied Mrs. Morris. "Some gipsies were in this neighbourhood about a week ago."

"But they made all sail last Thursday night," joined in the sailor.

"A tall woman, and a man with a patch over his eye," said the lawyer, examining his paper.

"That's 'em," cried Jonas; "an ill-looking pair, and a sight worse than they look."

"Can you tell me in which direction they went?" said the stranger, addressing himself to the sailor.

"Not I, sir," replied honest Jonas.

"They have a child with them, have they not,—a little girl?"

"They had a child, sir, but they tied her up like a dog, and left her behind when they made off."

"Ha!" exclaimed the lawyer eagerly; "and have you any knowledge where she may be now?"

"I should think that I have, seeing she's just alongside," cried Jonas, looking round for poor Madge, who, alarmed at finding herself the subject of conversation, had slunk behind her little friend Alie.

All the lawyer's attention was now turned towards Madge. He fixed his piercing gaze upon the timid child, questioned and cross-questioned her without mercy, not only about events which had happened recently, but, as it appeared to Johnny and Alie, about everything that could possibly have occurred in the whole course of a gipsy's life. The

dinner on the table was becoming quite cold; but the stranger had as little apparent regard for the hunger of the family as he had for the feelings of Madge. He wrote down most of the replies which he drew from her shy, reluctant lips, and concluded by proposing that she should accompany him in the post-chaise, as there was very important business connected with the child!

This was too much for poor Madge. She clung tightly to Alie, and, bursting into tears, begged that she might not be sent away.

"But if I were to take you to a fine house and fine friends, my dear?" said the lawyer, in an insinuating tone. "I may tell you that you were not born a gipsy; nor were those who deserted you your real parents. You were stolen long ago by those who have passed you off as their child. Your mother, Mrs. Everard, has been anxiously searching after you for years, and joyful indeed will she be to find that our search has at last been successful."

Alie and Johnny gave exclamations of pleasure and surprise, Jonas was startled into uttering a whistle, but Madge scarcely

understood the good news,—she still clung to her early friend, and sobbed out that she didn't want to go away, she wouldn't go away with "that man"!

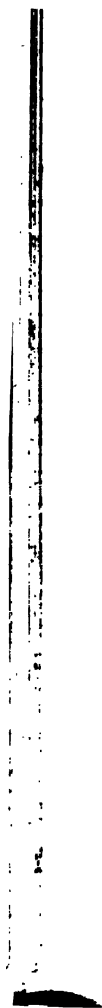
"Well," said the lawyer, with a smile, after a few vain attempts to coax her into confidence, "it is evident that she is both safe and contented where she now is. Let her remain here for the present, till her mother can come herself and claim her stray lamb from those who have so hospitably afforded her shelter and protection."

It would be difficult to describe all the talking, wondering, guessing, which went on in Mrs. Morris's dwelling after the lawyer had driven from her door. The news spread like wild-fire through the village; all kinds of additions were made to a story in itself sufficiently strange; and the kitchen was soon filled to overflowing with neighbours eager for news. Before night came the patience of Jonas was fairly tired out by insatiable questioners; and his pipe, had he still possessed one, would have been in imminent peril. The person who appeared least excited and delighted was poor little Madge herself, who would rather have been



MADGE AND HER MOTHER.

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told that she might remain with Alie and her mother to the end of her days, than that she was to live in a palace and be the daughter of a queen. She was like a weary, wounded bird, that has found a peaceful nest; and she was too young and ignorant to understand all the reasons that might make it an advantage to her to quit it for another.

But Madge was a very happy girl the next day, when she found herself in the arms of a mother,—a *real* mother,—one who, with love and joy streaming from her eyes, pressed her long-lost darling close and closer to her heart, as though she would hold her there for ever. With feelings of natural delicacy, Mrs. Morris and her family retired to Jonas's little room, and closed the door, not to intrude by their presence on the intense joy of a parent at such a meeting. What the lady said to Madge, or Madge to the lady, they therefore never knew; but what account the child had given of the generous kindness of her friends was easily to be seen when, at her mother's desire, she called them to speak to her. Mrs. Everard grasped the hand of Mrs. Morris with deep

emotion; thanked her with tears in her eyes; and insisted on her accepting from her, as an acknowledgment of her debt, a sum which would have covered poor Madge's expenses for years! The lady had brought her carriage half full of presents for the children,—beautiful books, choice sweetmeats and cakes; never before had the plain deal table been loaded with such a heap of good things! Alie found herself dressed from head to foot in nicer clothes than she ever had worn; for Madge insisted on her putting them on at once, that she might see how Alie looked in them, and laughed and clapped her hands with delight, as though this were to her the greatest treat of all. Johnny felt almost ashamed to accept the numerous presents,—he felt that he had so little deserved them, he had done so little, sacrificed so little, to promote the comfort of the stranger.

Suddenly a thought seemed to cross the mind of Madge, which cast a momentary shade over her bright little face. She ran up to her mother, laid hold on her arm with childish eagerness, and pointing to old Jonas, who was looking with hearty enjoyment on

the scene before him, exclaimed in an audible whisper, "Have you brought nothing for him?"

"Blessings on the lass!" cried the honest sailor; "I want nothing but such a sight as this! 'Tis as good as the view of the old white cliffs to the homeward-bound!"

"He was so kind,—so very kind," continued Madge, without noticing the interruption; "he broke his pipe, and gave up all his smoking, that I might not be sent to the work-house. Alie told me he did, and Alie always says true; and he ought to have some of the cake!"

The conclusion of Madge's speech set all the party laughing,—Jonas laughing the loudest of all. Mrs. Everard put her arm fondly around her little girl. "Perhaps we could think of something that our good friend would like still better than cake," she said gently.

Madge looked wistfully at Alie, her usual counsellor as well as friend. Suddenly her face brightened. "I know! I know!" she exclaimed; "I once heard him say he wished he'd a glass like those on board a ship, and he'd show us the hills a long

way off, and the mountains in the moon besides!"

"A telescope he shall have," said Mrs. Everard, "and one of the best that can be made."

The lady was as good as her word; and the sailor the next day became the happy owner of that which it had long been his wish to possess, though that such a wish should ever be gratified had never entered into the good man's calculations.

"It seems so strange," whispered Alie to Madge, "so very strange, that we should be so thanked and rewarded for such little acts of kindness! I don't believe that such a thing ever happened before!"

"My child, you are mistaken," said Mrs. Everard, who chanced to hear the observation; "more wondrous things are happening every day,—things of which the present scene is like a type. The poorest, weakest little one who suffers on earth, and needs the hand of Christian kindness, is the child of a Parent infinitely rich, infinitely great, who deigns to notice, and who will a thousand-fold reward, the smallest kindness shown for His sake. Nothing given in charity is ever

lost ; no effort made for charity is ever forgotten. *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*, are the words of Him who holds in His hands all the treasures of earth and heaven. We may not perhaps see in this world, but assuredly we shall see in the next, that however worthless in themselves our services may be, the Almighty condescends to accept them ; and that *he that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*"

Help the poor who need your aid,
Help with silver and with gold,
Ye whom God hath stewards made,
In your hands his wealth to hold.

Help the poor by kindly deed,—
Hands in willing service move ;
Clothe the bare, the hungry feed,—
Weary ne'er in acts of love.

Help the poor by kindly word ;
Comfort, counsel, wisely given,
Such by wandering sinners heard,
May those sinners lead to heaven !

Help the poor by earnest prayer,—
Lift your heart unto the Lord ;

FRIENDS IN NEED.

He alone can bless your care,
Make success its rich reward !

Gifts, words, works, and prayers, shall yet
Bring the Christian harvest sure ;
God will not your love forget :
Blesséd he that helps the poor !



THE MOTHER'S RETURN.



THE MOTHER'S RETURN.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto
thine own understanding."—PROV. III. 5.

I AM so glad that dear mother is coming
back to-day!" cried little Mary Ben-
son; "it seemed as if the week would
never be over."

"Yes; if we had not been so busy knit-
ting these cuffs for her we should have found
the time weary indeed," said Maria. "But
how much pleased she will be to have them;
and what a surprise it will be to her, when
she did not even know that we could
knit!"

"It was very kind in Mrs. Peters to teach
us. I hope that she will not let out our
secret: mother was to call at her house on
her way back, to leave the parcel of wool."

"Poor mother! she will be weary enough with her long, arduous work."

"She will forget all when she presses us to her heart," cried little Mary, her eyes sparkling with pleasure at the thought. "Oh! to think of being in her dear arms again!"—how we shall miss her when!"

"If mother could have afforded to pay for the coach, she might have been here by this time; but it seems as if she had never one sixpence to spare," sighed Maria. "I cannot help thinking," added the little girl after a pause, turning listlessly over the pages of a book which she was rather looking at than reading,— "I cannot help thinking that the Almighty cares less for us than he does for the rich and the great. If he is as tender and loving as we are told that he is, how is it that we want for so many things?"

"O Maria! it is very sinful to think in that way. We must trust in the Lord with all our heart, and not, in our naughty pride, fancy that we know what is good for us better than He who is all wisdom as well as love."

"I should like to know why there are such differences in the world," said Maria.

"We must remember what the Saviour said to Peter: *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* In another world we shall see that all God does is right. Do you not recollect what the clergyman told us in his sermon last Sunday,—that if there were no differences of station in this life, the rich would not be able to exercise charity, nor the poor to exercise patience?"

"The task of the rich is much easier than that of the poor," observed Maria, with a discontented look.

"Perhaps not," gently suggested Mary; "I do not think that the Bible makes it appear so. We are so often warned of the dangers of riches; and none of us can tell, if we had them, whether we should make a good use of them. I like those lines which mother taught us to repeat,—

'The greatest evil we can fear
Is—to possess our portion here.'

"We are little likely to suffer from that evil," observed Maria, with a bitter smile. "It does seem to me hard that mother, who is always so religious, and patient, and good,

should have to work so hard, and yet gain so little, while others have plenty without working at all. It seems as if God were hiding his face from us."

"Oh! *trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.* This is one of the verses which mother told me quiets her mind whenever she is tempted to murmur at her lot. But is not that mother crossing the field? Yes! yes! it is our own dear mother!" and both of the children, with a cry of delight, flew to the door to meet her, carrying their little present in their hands.

But what was the amazement of the girls at the reception which they met with from their mother,—from her whom they so tenderly loved, and had been so anxiously expecting! Mrs. Benson's face was flushed, her manner hurried; not one kiss, not one welcome smile, not one kind word, did she give; but, waving them away impatiently as they sprang forward to welcome her, "Back! back!" she cried; "don't touch me!" and, passing them in a moment, she hastened upstairs to her own room!

Neither of the children could at first utter

a word. With open eyes and lips apart, they stood as if transfixed, their surprise and mortification were so great. Then slowly and sadly they retraced their steps, and returned to the room which they had just quitted. Neither spoke for a little while, till Maria, pettishly flinging down the cuff which she had knitted, exclaimed, "Who would ever have thought that mother could be so unkind!"

"Unkind?—oh! never, never say such a word!" cried Mary, her own eyes swimming with tears.

"She looked as if she would have pushed me back—me, her own child—if I had ventured a little nearer; and after not having seen us for so many days! I cannot think what could make her treat us in such a manner."

"Don't think, but *trust*," faltered her gentle sister; "we may be certain that mother has good reasons of her own. She always loves us, and acts for our good; and though we cannot just now understand what she does, we may be sure, quite sure, that it is wise and kind."

"Bless you, my child, for your loving

trust!" exclaimed her mother, who was at that moment entering the room, and who now pressed her little daughter to her heart more warmly and more tenderly than ever, as though to make up by increasing love for even five minutes' apparent neglect.

"O mother! why would you not let us come near you?" exclaimed Maria, as she too shared in the fond embrace.

"For your own sakes, my darlings, only for your own sakes! I had called on Mrs. Peters, as I had promised, on my way; and not till I had entered into her cottage did I know that her only son was then lying there dangerously ill of the scarlet fever!"

"Poor Robin!" cried the little girls, full of sympathy for the trouble of their neighbour. "Is not that fever terrible and infectious?"

"Most infectious, my children; and I own that I felt grieved and frightened at having entered the house. I fear not for myself: were it not for you I should have offered to remain to help to nurse the poor boy; but I dreaded lest I might be carrying here death in my very clothes,—that I might be bringing misery into my own happy home; and

not till I had laid aside my bonnet and large cloak did I dare to embrace my children. You met me so eagerly at the door, that I was obliged to call out very hastily, or you would have been in my arms before I could stop you; and I had no time for explanations then."

"Mother had good reasons," said Maria to herself; "how strange it was that I ever could doubt her!"

"And how is poor Mrs. Peters?" inquired Mary, as her mother took a chair near the fire, and her little daughters seated themselves at her feet. "She is so fond of her son,—she could not live without him. How does she bear this terrible trial?"

"Like a Christian," replied her mother,—
"like one who knows that all events are in the hands of an all-wise Being, who does not willingly afflict his children. All her hopes and her fears are laid before Him in prayer; and, having used all human means to preserve her son, she now rests humbly on the infinite mercy of the Lord, who ordereth all things well. She has been given that trusting, confiding spirit which is so pleasing in the sight of Heaven."

“Ah! that is what I want,” murmured Maria, hiding her head on her parent’s knee. “Mother, I have learned a lesson to-day from the pain which it cost me to doubt *your* love, and the shame that I feel now that I ever could have done so. Mary deserved your first kiss, mother. I can love, very greatly love, but she can both love and *trust*.”

Trust in the Lord with all thy heart
While sunshine glitters o’er thee ;
Oh ! choose in youth the better part,
When all is bright before thee !
Nor think thy pleasures will decrease :
’Tis Faith that here brings joy and peace,
And leads to heaven’s glory !

Trust in the Lord with all thy heart
When sorrows gather o’er thee ;
When lone and desolate thou art,
And all is dark before thee !
’Tis Faith that can the mourner cheer ;
’Tis Faith gives hope and patience here,
And leads to heaven’s glory !

